

Transnational research Report

Focus group interview

*identifying practice, need, gaps and target
related to outdoor education and nature
pedagogy*

GLOW PROJECT OUTCOME R1

DENMARK

DESCRIPTION OF WORK

Each partner in the GLOW project all completed interviews with 9-10 educators during 1-2 focus groups with 69 educators in total. The educators comes from many different preschools from 6 different countries; Cyprus, Slovakia, Northern Macedonian, Portugal, Norway and Denmark. All the countries have different approaches and cultural experiences in outdoor and nature pedagogy, as well in experimental and free play pedagogy. The collection of information from the partners is critical in identifying practices, gaps and targets.

Methodology

While using the focus group technique, the partners will be using prompts, which are statements or short questions that researchers throw out to the focus group participants and take a step back and listen to the natural conversations that emerge based on the prompt and only redirect the conversation back to the topic at hand. Focus groups offer a great way for recording people's thoughts, feelings, views, perceptions and opinions within a group of people who also share their feelings, views, thoughts and perceptions. They might have disagreements, but they work together to solve them.

If the partners select the focus group technique, we suggest the focus groups take place in small groups of 5-6 participants. Smaller groups allow moderators to better monitor the discussion and allow for more views, thoughts and ideas to be explored.

Interviews: Interview is a technique that allows participants to go much deeper to the topic explored. This offers more insights which will be useful in the data analysis phase. Interviews are used to explore the views, feelings, thoughts and perceptions of the participant. There are different types of interviews that offer different types of control.

appropriate.

After the focus group interview, the partners went through all the data and identified main points related to each question in the questionnaire. They also identified main points in practice, need, gaps and targets. The partner have tried their best to be fair to the educators answers. Each partner wrote a national rapport witch is the data & bag ground for the final rapport.

In the final rapport is based on the main points from each question from every focus group from each partner (7 partners in GLOW). The questions and answers is collected and systematic into similar category/main points. The main points & most frequency answers is written under each question, with the answer with the most hits first. Under each question is between 2-4 main points. In the analysis is collected the main points from each category; practice, need, gaps and targets from each partners. The conclusion is based on the most frequent answers in the questionnaire and the main points in each partners analysis of the focus groups.

Did you follow the methodology?

Yes, the partners followed the methodology

“Yes, our team followed these guidelines and adjusted them accordingly to promote elaborated discussions based on the focus interview protocol of questions. We allowed freedom of expression during the conversation, however we used our focus group protocol as agreed with some added clarifying questions whenever needed. Because of difficulties to find time and place that suited all participants’ schedules, due to summer period, we had to conduct three focus groups, in order to secure the minimum number of participants needed and rich data collection” (Frederick University)

“We used the methodology as described in the manual but we also allowed the talk to run free when there were topics that were interesting.

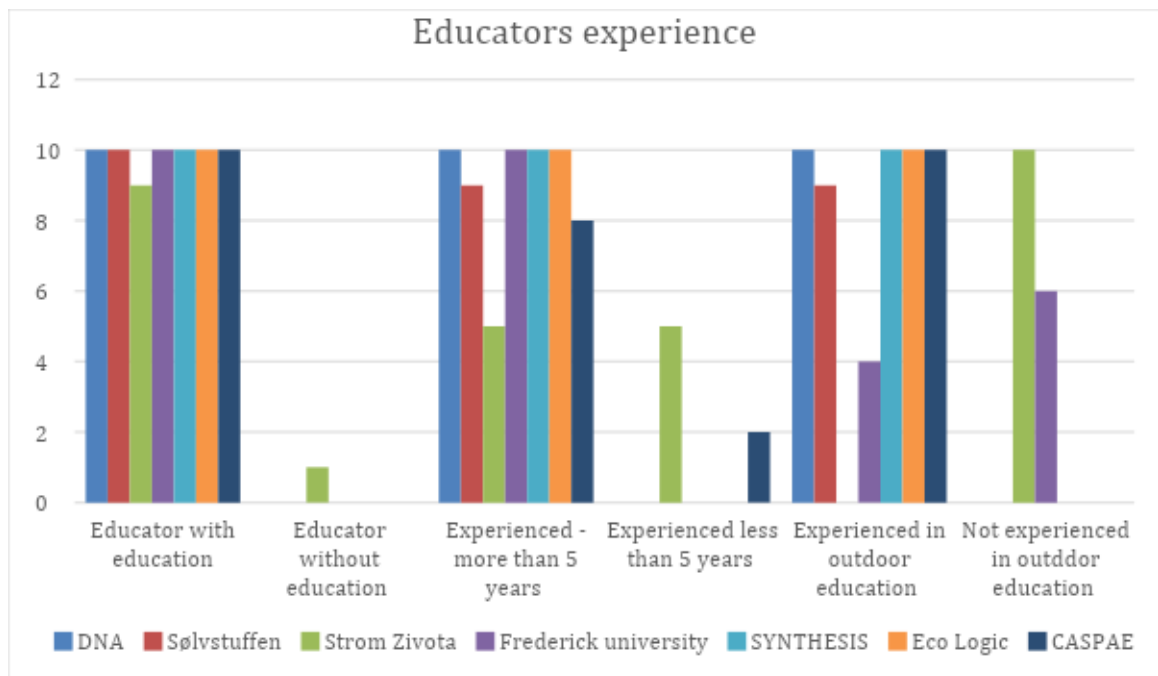
The focus group questions were not displayed for the participants but were asked and the participants could reflect on them. The participants had a general discussion regarding the questions where the different views were the presenter.” (SZ)

conversation to have the time to ask all questions.” (DNA)

DESCRIPTION OF FOCUS GROUP

Profession & Experience

All participants were educators that work with children and most educators with many years of experience



Number of participants in the focus groups

69 educators – all focus groups had 10 participants, except Norway with 9 educators

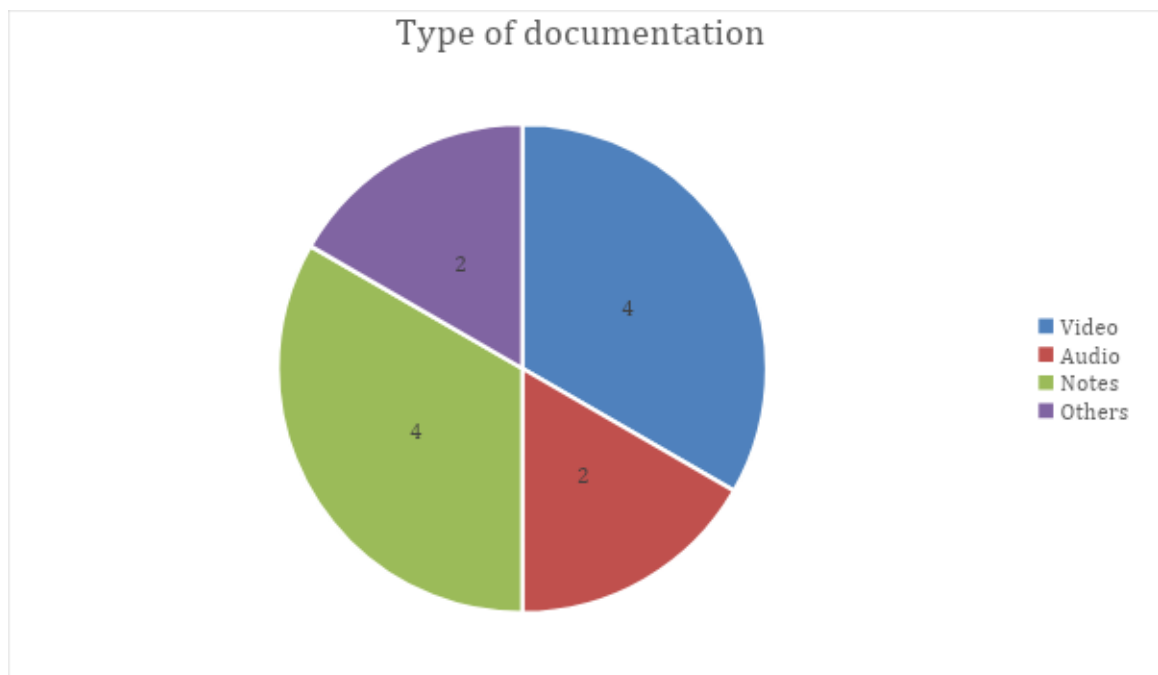
Location

Most of the focus group were held online, using ZOOM & TEAMS, but some were held in each partner's country in a location near by the organization –

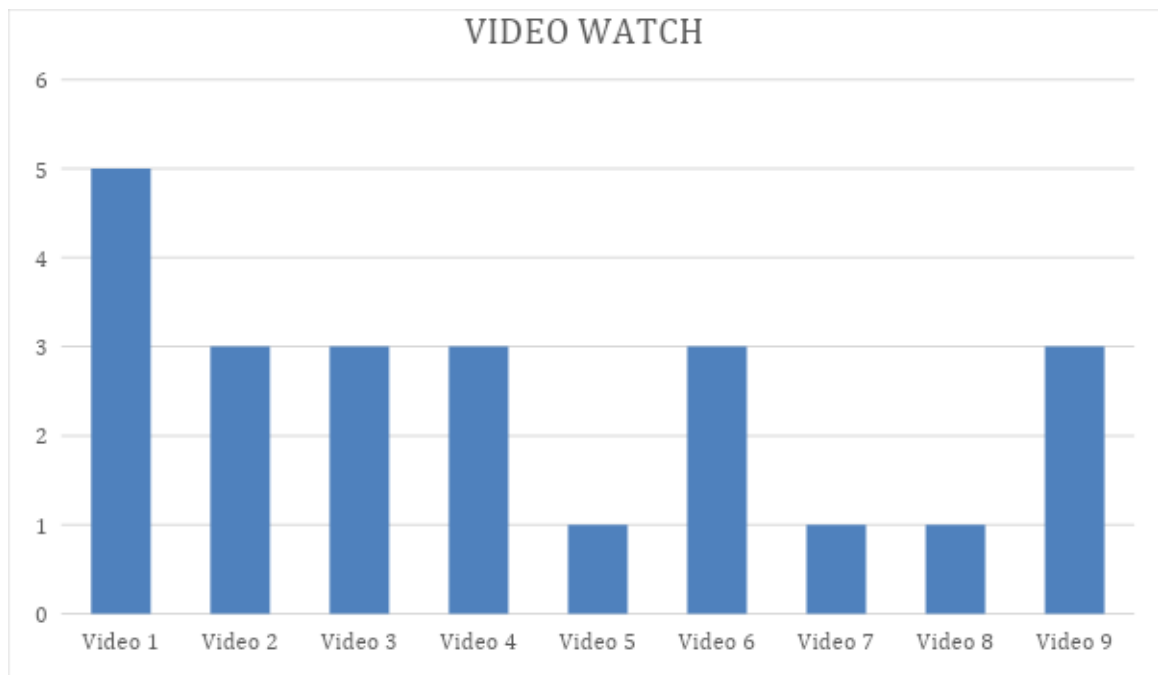
How did you completed the questionnaire?

3 partners completed the questionnaire chronological and systematic, 2 partners with random questions and more loose talk and the last 2 partners did the questionnaire in a semi structured form

How did you document the focus groups; Video, audio, notes or other?



What video did you watch?



Main reason for taking part in the focus group, 3 main reasons

- Motivated to know more about outdoor education and new educational approaches
- Share experience and knowledge with other educators
- Inspiration for activities and making better learning environments

First part - Questionnaire 1

1. IN WHAT CONTEXT AND WHEN DID YOU COME ACROSS THE TERM OUTDOOR EDUCATION?

Main Points

- Heard about outdoor education and free play from a college/manager/friend
- Social media, social network
- Outdoor education is included in the normal practice
- Read book/articles about education

Quotes

1. *"I forgot how much we we enjoyed being outside during the Corona time and how the children were more calm"*

2. *"In a danish documentary that I saw on TV, and lead me to try to find out more about it. I saw a news report on TV that showed a portuguese school that has classrooms outdoor".*

2. HOW WOULD YOU APTLY DEFINE THIS TERM?

Main Points

There are different opinios about the definition of the term "outdoor Education". Some define it as;

- Free play & learning outside the usual space
- Others refer to it as an unconventional way of educating children about other/knew subjects/areas.

- Hands on experience
- Some consider that it is a way of further developing children's skills (eg: social). Others associate it to a returning to their childhood life experiences, where activities where natural.

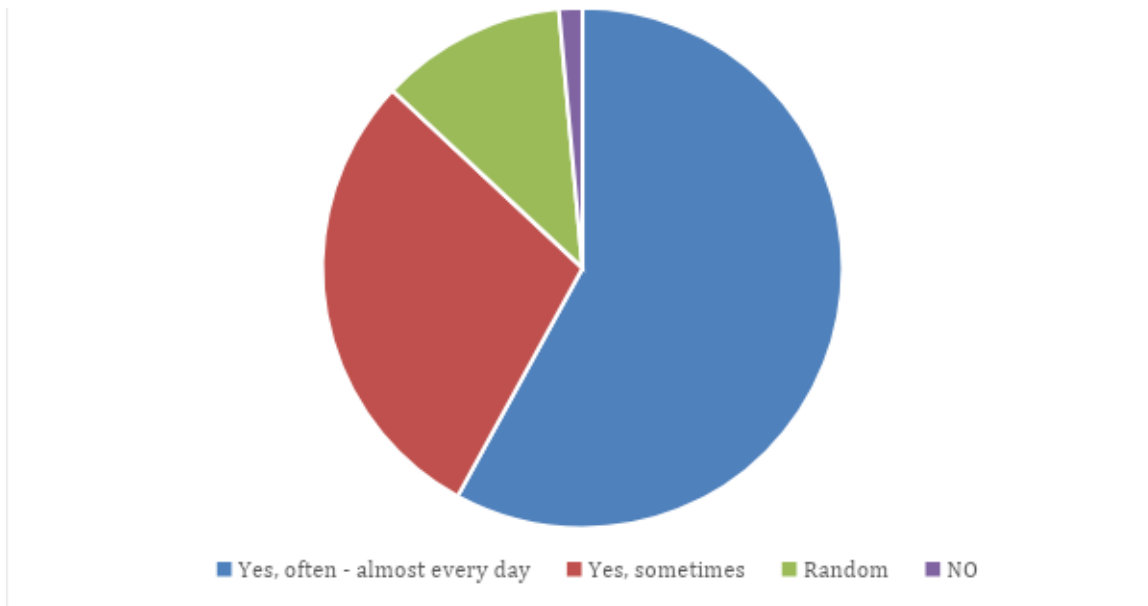
Quotes

1. *"Outdoor learning is learning taking place in an outer space, where there are no walls to constrain it and which also happens out of specific instructional design. It self-develops and evolves"*
2. *"Instead of a conventional education we try to educate children about other areas outdoor"*
3. *"If we can't bring the children to nature we can bring nature to the children."*

3. DOES OUTDOOR EDUCATION TAKE PLACE IN YOUR KINDERGARTEN/SCHOOL? WHERE AND HOW OFTEN? PLEASE GIVE EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES THAT YOU IMPLEMENT.

Main Points

- Most of the educators often (every day)use outdoor education (40 out of 69 participant), but are also aware that many educators don't use the outdoor environment
- 20 of the educators are doing outdoor activities sometimes (weekly)
- Only 8 of the educators are practicing outdoor education rare or never (random)
- 1 educator had never used outdoor education (never outdoor)



Examples of activities;

- Free play activities
- Child led activities
- Pick up garbage
- Insects and bugs
- Trees and leaves
- Collect materials in nature

Quotes

1. *"I let children play freely in the schoolyard"*
2. *"We have a regular activity that includes to go outside the school and pick up garbage that's poluting the space"*
3. *"The most important experiences we give the children during the time they spend in kindergarten are probably learning to enjoy the outdoors"*

4. WHAT RULES DO YOU FOLLOW WHEN BEING OUTDOORS IN THE SCHOOLYARD OR OUTSIDE OF IT?

Main Points

- Most of the educators inform that they are following the same rules as traditional kindergarten/preschools
- There is a focus on rules and safety & risk assessment
- They evaluate the place where they are going, to see if it has supporting facilities (bathrooms, drinking fountains, etc), if it is safe and if it has opportunities for children.
- They have to be very aware of the children, to avoid that they get hurt. They consider to be necessary to include in school regulations the obligation to children have a change of clothes at school, wellies and raincoat.

Write at least two Quotes

1. *“The communication of regulations occurs from before for what is allowed and what is not. They know in advance what is going to take place outside. They follow the teacher so that they are safer”.*

"To leave the school grounds we need authorization and more human resources to go with the group";

2.

"We are also guilty, because we don't let the children get dirty";

3. **“As few rules as possible must be present when we are out in nature, unless it is about safety”**

5. WHAT PROBLEMS DO YOU ENCOUNTER WHEN YOU ARE OUTDOORS?

Main Points

- The parents ask many questions and there is a fear from some parents when the child is outdoor. The insecurity and fears of parents and school's staff opinions influences our practices. There is a need to bring awareness among parents and school community about the importance of outdoor education. Being outdoor brings a higher risk of children getting hurt.
- Being outdoor brings a higher risk of children getting hurt.
- Children lack play competences and competences to be outdoor. Children also don't know how to enjoy themselves or play if they are not given directions. If schools have no spaces defined to do activities, like eg: games drawn on the floor, it seems that children don't know what to do or what to play. It is difficult to assure transportation to get outside the school grounds. And It is necessary to previously analyse the spaces. There is a need to think about the conditions.
- Educators ratio is a limit – some educators have a ratio 1:25 – one teacher to many children – and then it is difficult to go outside
- There are some prejudices regarding the use of outdoor spaces: what to do or not to do, weather conditions, appropriate clothes, etc.

Write at least two Quotes

1. Schoolyards have a lot of cement, therefore they can get hurt worst inside the courtyard than in nature. When in the schoolyard we have to follow the school rules. We cannot allow children to clime the trees and the walls, because it is not allowed inside school. We cannot let them step on the grass or run free under the rain. That affects our approach regarding outdoor education.

2. "Sometimes we are afraid of innovating, due to parents or other adults reactions",

3. *"The ratio between teachers and learners, is a determining obstacle. For example, if one child gets upset from all 25 groups, what happens to the supervision of the rest. If there is an accident of sorts, you will not manage".*

6. IS THE WEATHER A CONSTRAINT FOR YOU OR DO OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES TAKE PLACE INDEPENDENTLY OF IT?

Main Points

- The weather is not a constraint, however we may get disappointed when we have an activity programmed for outside and it is raining.
- Most of the kindergarten activities are carried out regardless of the weather, except on days when it is raining heavily, windy or freezing. Schools are not equipped for such weather - clothes, rubber boots, raincoats.
- How parents approach the bad weather affect what teachers can do. There are parents who perceive playing outside unacceptable in bad weather and this prevents outdoor learning. Also, the living style of some children, form habits of mind that learners should not be exposed to any cold weather but remain to a sustained warm room.
- If we have weather appropriate clothes, that is not a problem.

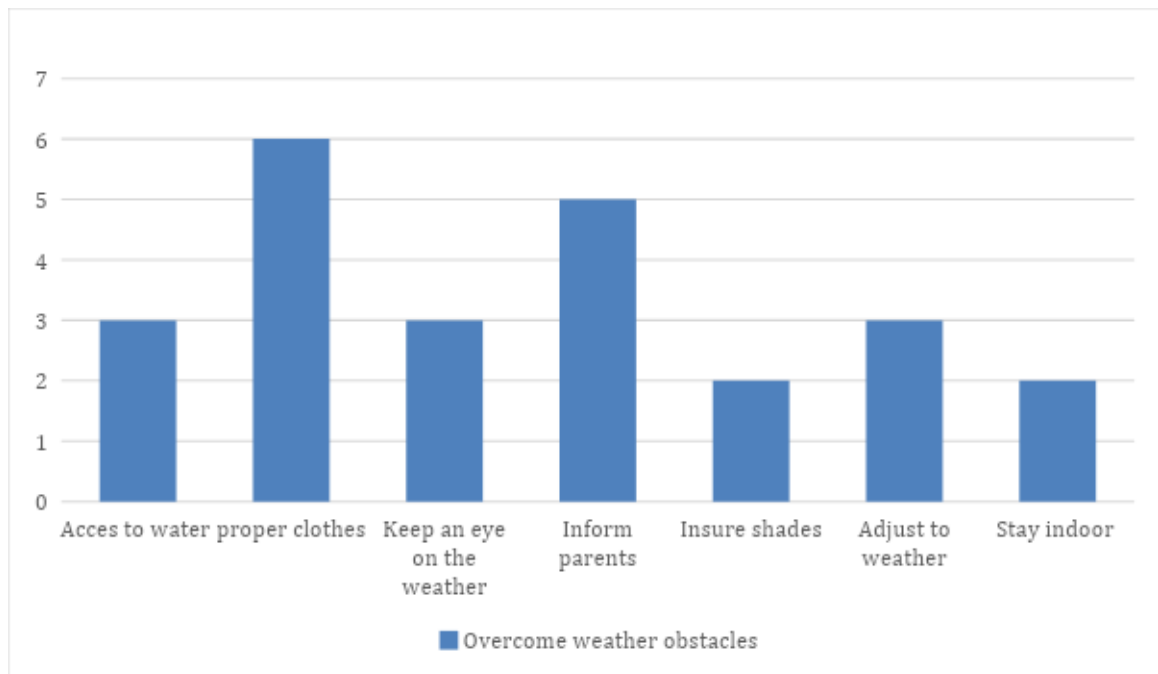
Write at least two Quotes

1. For us, as long as there is no storm, we go even in the rain. If it's just a gentle drizzle or gentle rain, at our school rules we should go in all weathers. ...And that's even more of a treat for them because every puddle is ours. We don't avoid it at all.

2.

cold or too hot".

7. GIVE EXAMPLES OF HOW YOU OVERCOME WEATHER-RELATED OBSTACLES. Main Points



Write at least two Quotes

protect from the sun and dehydration.

3. “Good role models among the staff create children who show joy in outdoor activities regardless of the weather.”

8. ARE THERE OTHER CONSTRAINTS (BESIDES WEATHER) LIMITING YOUR TIME OUTDOORS?

Main Points

- Colleague attitude and missing understanding/support
- Missing practice and knowledge about outdoor education
- Educators ratio – sometimes 1.25 – one educator for 25 children
- Rules and regulations
- Limited time
- Parents missing support and understanding

Write at least two Quotes

1. "The number of adults that we need to have when we go outside school. The number of adults that we need to have when we get outside schoolgrounds. The limited time that we have to be outside during school time. The rules that exist regarding the use of school grounds."

2. *"Getting children outdoors must fit the overall followed school schedule with advance planning about what will take place".*

3. Our biggest problem that we have always had is dog walkers. It's very dangerous. This is a pretty big problem in the city when we go to the park.

9. WHAT ADJUSTMENTS NEED TO BE MADE TO ALLOW YOU TO CARRY OUT MORE ACTIVITIES OUTDOORS?

- Better ratio for educators – more options – rise the number of adults that it is required when we get outside the school grounds.
- Appropriated clothes – for educators and children
- To know well the school neighbourhood and the places that we may use when we get outside.
- Curriculum adjustment for more outdoor education and more options
- To bring awareness among parents and school community.

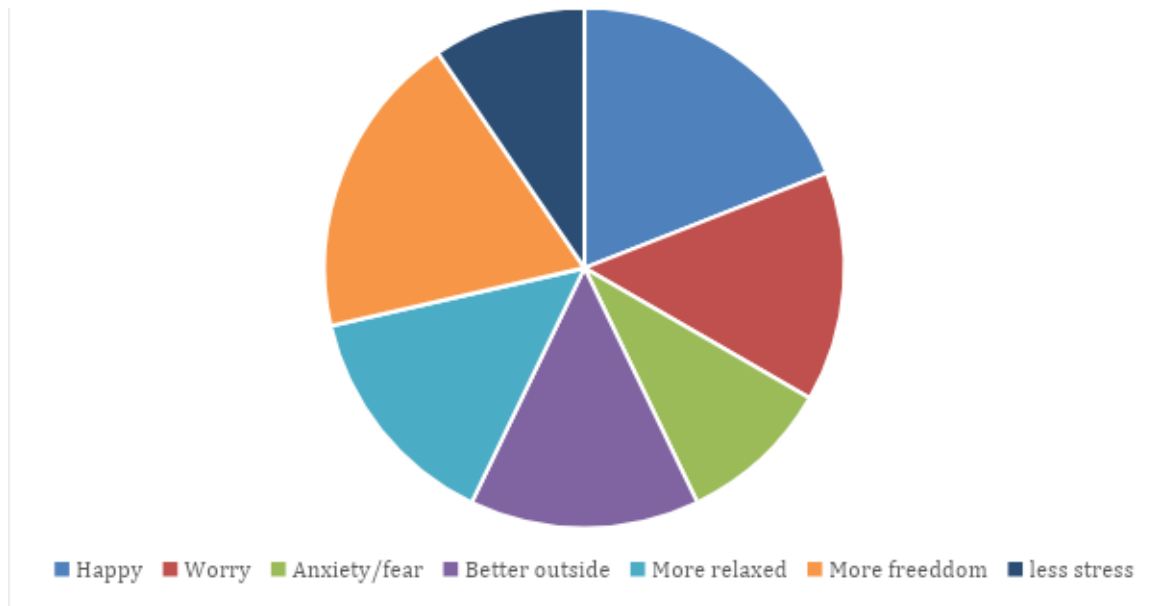
Write at least two Quotes

1. *"In one of the schools I have worked, nature was totally missing from the school-yard. Children were crying out for outdoor interaction, they ended up scratching the walls, and eganged themselves into imaginary play, calling the dust, magic dust from the walls. Unfortunately, their outdoor time only involves running around the yard among plastic toys with very limited stimuli for exploration".*

2. "To have the number of adults that we need to have when we go outside school"; 3.

10. HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT BEING OUTSIDE WITH THE CHILDREN? NAME YOUR MAIN EMOTIONS AND COMPARE THEM WITH BEING INSIDE.

Main Points



- The overall feeling outside is more happy and freedom than being inside
- Some educators need more competences for not feeling anxiety and worry's
- Some educators feel pressure related to safety and risky play

Write at least two Quotes

1.

"I'm more worried when I'm outside school because children may disappear";

2. *"Of-course, getting out of the four classroom walls, and beeing out in a non-constrained space in the envrionment surfaces a whole different feeling for us and for children who get excited"*

3. "It is just something special to be in nature"

After watching the videos

1. WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR EDUCATION COMPARED TO INDOOR EDUCATION?

Main Points

- The learning experiences is more complex in outdoor education
- There is more freedom outdoors.
- There are more option and more learning in outdoor education
- Children are more creative & innovative
- Children and educators are more inspired and motivated
- Children are more happier in more free play and child initiated activities

Quotes

1. *"Children are happier when in contact with nature"*
2. *"Learners participate actively. They are not passive recipients in what they do, they get to observe, explore, work together"*
3. *"When you don't have to follow a certain curriculum but have the opportunity to play, your mind will explore new things and ask questions you don't ask inside."*

2. ARE THERE DIFFERENCES IN THE CONDITIONS FOR IMPLEMENTING OUTDOOR EDUCATION IN URBAN AND RURAL AREAS? IF YES, NAME THEM.

Main Points

- Yes, ex. in urban areas there are fewer spaces, and those that exist must be complemented. In rural areas we just have to get outside to have natural spaces. Parents in

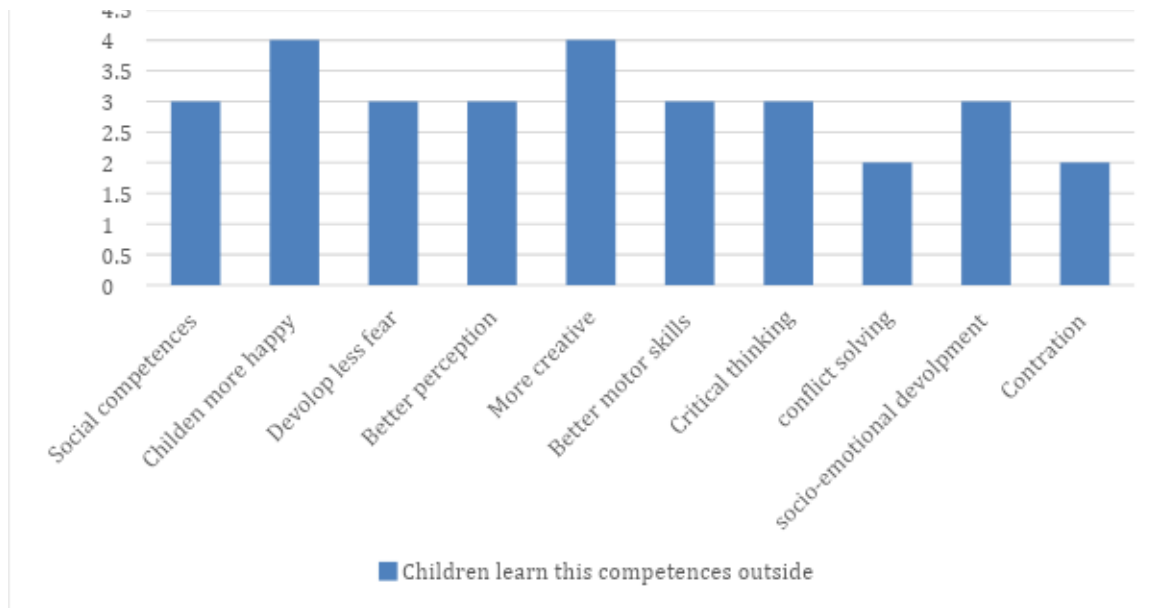
ruining their clothes.

- There are more materials at our disposal in rural areas.
- Usually, in the city's schools, children get outside to go to museums. Parents understand better if something happens in an organized activity and place, then if we say that it happened in nature.
- The liberty given to children in a park inside the city is different than that given in forests in rural places, because of safety.

Quotes

1. *I.; "There is a big difference between the parents that chose an urban kindergarden and a kindergarden with a focus on outdoor and nature."*
2. *"Parents in rural areas are more predisposed to outdoor activities".. "When i was working in a kindergarden in a village, we actually managed to remove the classroom's walls, since we were very often out of the classroom, studying anything happening in the village, for example, we would go with children to see vegetable and herbal gardens in the village houses, we would study animals, bees since the village had nearby a bee-keeper. Everything was initiated out of the classroom". You would see a kindergarden teacher with 32 kids aroundher wondering the villafe everyday. The best 5 years of my professional career."*

3. WHAT SKILLS DO CHILDREN LEARN WHILE OUTDOORS? HOW DOES OUTDOOR EDUCATION AFFECT CHILDREN'S PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING?



- Children are happier when in contact with nature.
- Children develop less fears and get less dependent of technologies. Children get a better perception of the importance of rules, because they learn them while they are playing in nature.
- Children don't have walls or bars but they know what are their boundaries. They develop dexterity, creativity and social skills.

Quotes

1. "For example, the fact that the child will not urge to kill the insect, the reptile but it will strive to explore it, to observe it at its natural space. It cultivates both the need for exploration but also emotional capacity, compassionate attitude In a conventional classroom this is attempted using rhetorical form, does not come so naturally, we try to impose the attitude to learners"

2. "Children are happier when in contact with nature"

3. "Outside, children have a freer regime, they have more space and can relax more. So they get used to playing around and they are more controllable, I can watch them better."

4. DOES YOUR WAY OF COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN AND BETWEEN CHILDREN DIFFER WHEN INDOORS AND OUTDOORS?

Main Points

- Educators and children are more relaxed inside and there is less conflict between the children
- Inside the adults are more strict and worried with rules and behaviours. Outside they are more relaxed and that is felt in the way they communicate. The context is different, therefore the children's behaviour is different. Outdoor children have more opportunities than inside, therefore they have more to choose and that results in less conflicts about something they want to do.
- Children are more spontaneously and take more initiative outdoors

Quotes

1. *"You may want to speak and they won't let you speak because of their excitement. They want to explore anything around"*
2. *"Inside we are more worried about rules"*
3. *" We give more directions for activities inside school than outdoors"*
4. *"Outside children practice their communications skills"*

5. WHAT EDUCATIONAL METHODS DO YOU USE IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION? ARE ANY OF THEM SPECIFIC TO ACTIVITIES CARRIED OUT OUTDOORS

Main Points

- Here are many different methods and the methods used outdoor is the same pedagogy methods as indoor
- Make an evaluation of the outdoor space and the activities that we may suggest to children.
- exploratory (inductive) approaches of learning - directed

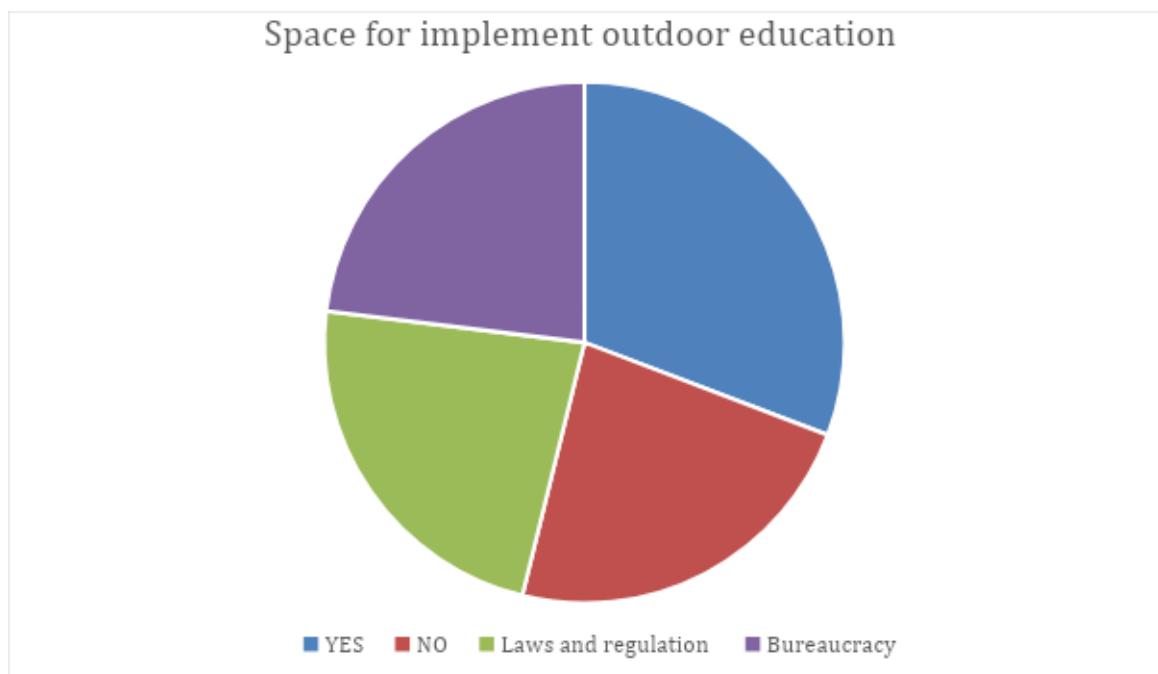
- Holistic approach

Quotes

1. *"We make a pre evaluation of the outdoor space and the activities that we may suggest to children".*
2. *"Inductive approaches where the learners will lead the process and reach to conclusions. Learning outside is open to many different techniques".*
3. *"We, when we take magnifying glasses or something that we can observe with, we have explorers' journals, so even here they (children) are more able, in my opinion, to learn about life and the cycle in nature than if I tell them in class based on a picture. It's something completely different."*

6. DOES THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM PROVIDE ENOUGH SPACE FOR YOU TO IMPLEMENT OUTDOOR EDUCATION.

Main Points



- Many educators feel that there is possibilities in the curriculum, but in many countries there are not space for spending time outside – its not part of the

to extensive. The professionals are getting older and less available to search and try new approaches.

- There is a barrier in laws and regulations & bureaucracy for more outdoor education in many countries

Quotes

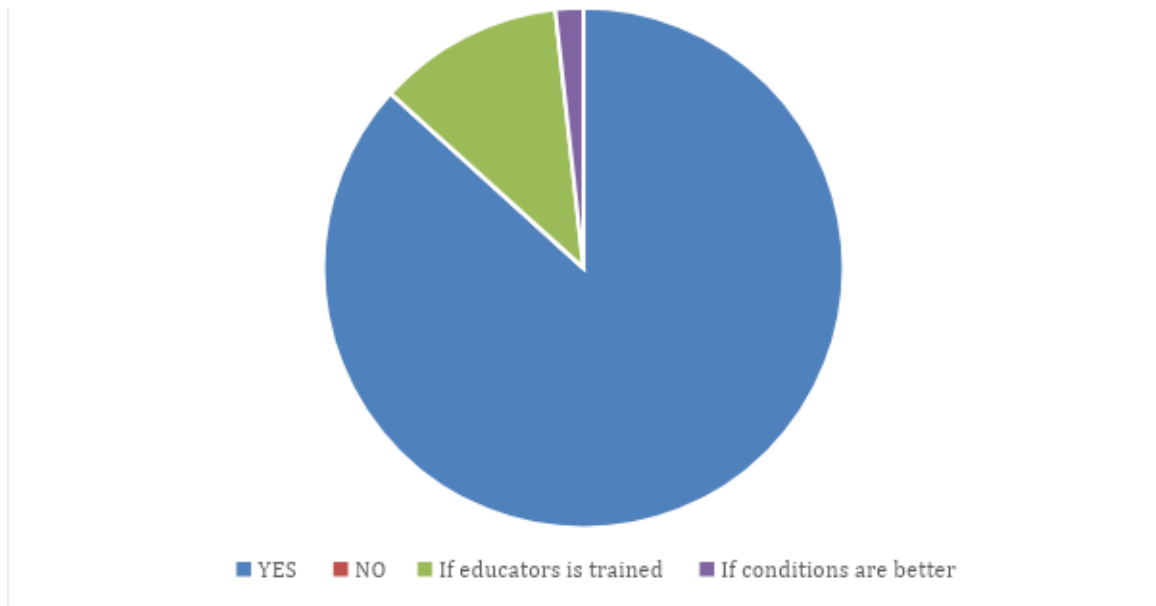
1. *“There is an antithesis. Even though the national curriculum promotes the interaction with nature, however it does not explicitly provide helpful guidelines for outdoor learning”*

2. *“Teachers don't have time, because the curriculum is too extensive”;*

3. *“Overall, I find this state curriculum limiting, in the sense that the standards are a little bit... sufficient. I could imagine it differently.”*

7. BASED ON YOUR EXPERIENCE, WOULD YOU RECOMMEND IMPLEMENTING OUTDOOR EDUCATION EVERY DAY?

Main Points



Quotes

“A better idea would be to promote a kind of collaboration with forest school and out school so that our students could spend a week or two weeks , full days at the forest school, where they would be engaged to outdoor activities.”

It's also in the framework of healthy lifestyle, psychohygiene etc... I mean, I'm sure that the teachers also liven up outside more than inside.”

Analysis

IDENTIFYING CURRENT PRACTICES, GAPS AND NEEDS (TARGETS)

Practices

Analysis for the current practices/main points

Educators

Educators try to encourage outdoor learning, but it is all dependent on the capabilities of the teacher.

Train educators to practice the outdoor education approaches. It is very important that the teachers are aware of their attitude and behavior regarding outdoor activities

Raise the number of educators that support and practice the outdoor education approaches. To create a handbook with tips that aim to simplify the outdoor activities.

Clothes

There is also a challenge in making sure that the children have the right clothes to be outside. If they are cold, wet and uncomfortable they do not learn and can't enjoy themselves. Especially in the urban kindergartens and in the socially economical low areas many children are not dressed or have the clothes to be outside.

Staying outdoors is implemented in kindergartens regularly, if the weather is pleasant. From time to time, urban children in particular also go on an outing

Parents

It is important to communicate with the parents about the good effect outdoor activities have on the children's ability to learn and grow. We need to show the parents what outdoor activities mean by sharing photos, videos and also invite them to join our outdoor activities to see what it is like.

Give both the parents and the teachers access to articles and research that focuses on how outdoor activities can contribute to children's ability to learn and develop (NORWAY)

Children outdoor environment & play

Educators methods can be adapted to outside learning – outside learning does not include moving an indoors lesson outdoors, rather adapting the learning experience.

Play is important for the development of the child and should be prioritized. Children learn to be more autonomous and adapt to their surroundings better

is something they remember. They learn to communicate better and to take care of nature.

Giving children regular outdoor experiences contributes to learning and development

Learn to respect and learn about environmental and sustainability activities - and everything that is included as part of the environment.

Gaps

Analysis for Gaps and main points

Educators

Preparing children to be outdoors takes a lot of time and unless the teacher has someone to help dress the children, they prefer to stay inside.(SZ)

Educators do not have enough time to think about and prepare activities. Some teachers have no experience of being outdoors and therefore that would take place outside.

The educators don't feel comfortable being outside. They don't have the skills and experience to be outside and therefore it is easy to stay inside. Lack of ideas for lessons.

The educators in the suburbs have a different mindset to nature and often it is easier to find nature and you don't have to travel far to find a green spot. It is not the same in the cities.

Teaching and learning practices usually have more traditional approaches, using classrooms. Educational practices are focused on the educators' goals for the children and not on children's free initiative.(CAS)

Prefer to stay indoors, where they have defined rules and routines in the classroom.

the road in progress.

There is a gap in education and in the way that the educators approach nature. They need clear methods and inspiration to be outside with children

It is necessary to work with the employees to make them aware of their big influence on the children when it comes to outdoor activities and make it clear to them to what extent outdoor activities contribute to children's development and learning

Children outdoor environment & play

Schoolyards are not well equipped and most don't have nature spaces for children to play in and enjoy. Many schools don't have forests or gardens nearby, therefore have to get transportation when they want to go to these places.

Find solutions for schools to re-establish where learning can take place and how in small groups

Parents

The mistrustful and irresponsible attitude of parents who prefer children to stay indoors or not bring them appropriate clothing.

Concerns for the health and safety of pupils.

There is a lot of bureaucracy and requirements regarding getting outside the school grounds. Most parents are not aware of the importance of outdoor education to the development of children. They have some prejudices and fears regarding this subject.

Better knowledge from parents and guardians on what is meant by outdoor learning, and that it is not just play time with the children

Clothes

It takes a long time to get dresses and there is not enough time to be out before they have to go in again.

Many children don't have appropriated equipment and clothes necessary to get outside in spite of the weather conditions

The gap with safety concerns where the educators do not have the experience and knowledge to organize themselves and the children outside which makes them afraid to go outside.

Teachers feel that they need better instructions for safer/confident outdoor learning

Rules & organization

Lack of empirical research informing theory and praxis affecting real change in schools

No law about outdoor learning

Lack of more funds for planning outdoor activities

Issues with costs – for schools in the city, they need to travel to access nature for the children

Some teachers felt that it is not clear from the government guidelines if they should promote outdoor learning and how to facilitate it

Needs

Analysis for needs and main points

Educators

School principals need to be convinced of the need for outdoor education and require teachers to spend as much time outdoors with children as possible.

Educators would be happy to attend the courses and have also expressed an interest in sharing their experiences of outdoor education together. (SZ)

Need for professional development – training for teachers. need to develop an orientation of learning outdoors. Not many teachers understand the 'what' and 'how to'

to in place which is far from being initiated and then accessing learning centers.

We need to make a toolkit for the teachers with knowledge and activities also for urban kindergartens and for the day when there are few educators available. (DK)

Some felt the need for clearer guidelines from the curriculum on what outdoor learning should include

Parents

We need to teach the parents why it is important to be outside and make sure that if the parents can't provide the right clothing then the kindergarten will.

Principals would need a simple handout to give to parents explaining why outdoor education is necessary and what the parent is expected to provide

Raising awareness among parents about the implementation of outdoor teaching, and thus building responsibility, maturity and a sense of belonging. (made by me) in children.

Better understanding from parents that outdoor learning is also learning

Rules & organization

We need guidelines on how to be outside when it is not sunny and guidelines on how long and how often children need to be outside.

We need to make it easy to go outside also for the urban kindergartens that do not have nature beside them

Generate guidelines and policy framework for outdoor activities or guide of best practice. Make the benefits of outdoor education explicit

Providing funds for decorating the yards, building corners, excursions outside the school from the youngest age

Better support from the government via subsidies

Better regulation from the government on the ratio of teachers to children for outdoor activities

Proper clothing

We need to make sure the staff when they are hired know the expectations of being outside and that the kindergartens provide cloth so there is no excuse.

Time and money to competence enhancement of the employees

Money for equipment (Norway)

Targets

Analysis for targets and main points

Educators

Educators need training to look at the outdoor without nature as an opportunity and training in nature education approach.

The state education programme is quite detailed in content and performance standards. It is important for teachers to ensure that any activity ideas are linked to these standards so that they can implement them easily.

We need to show the educators how easy and how many benefits there are when you take the children out in nature.

Further develop the offer we have in relation to outdoor activities by raising the skills of the employees

Parents

We need to raise awareness among parents on the topic, or promote their involvement in outdoor activities (invite them to some sessions, for example) In order to get outside no matter the weather conditions, children need to have appropriated equipment and clothes.

public

A greater degree of information to the parents to show them the great possibilities outdoor activities gives the children when it comes to learning (Norway)

Rules & organization

We need funds to hire more human resources and equipment. (CAS)

Relevant Curriculum and instruction for formal and informal outdoor education and pedagogy

Policy (curriculum reform and guidelines for promoting outdoor action)

Equity, Access and Opportunities and resources to tackle challenges preventing and constraining outdoor action.

To implement mandatory outdoor teaching, but at the same time to make an effort to act on the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs to reduce the groups.

Children outdoor environment and play

Children Promote a love for nature, through learning as well as showing children what it means to respect nature and what it has to offer

Schoolyards need to be improved to have nature spaces for children to play in and enjoy.

Promote autonomous play and learning experiences

Promote outside thinking and cooperation from the children

Promote a better/healthier relationship with nature – understand that you can learn anywhere

Comments

We had an educational and interesting discussion in relation to outdoor activities during the focus group-interview.

the future. Every day we see results that indicate that outdoor activities contribute to children's development to a large extent.

The focus group and the discussion were very successful and I hope they will contribute to the improvement of education in our country.

The discussion was very successful and we hope that they will be a starting point in contributing to the improvement of education in our country.

Overall, teachers are willing to have children learn in an outdoor setting. They like to promote it as they recognise the benefits of learning outdoors but they feel that there should be better guidance from the government and local authorities to promote it.

There is an issue with the cost that is associated with outdoor learning – having to transport the children to an outdoor area.

Parents/guardians need to have a good understanding that children can and are learning by being outdoors – it is not just games.

There is a good foundation being set up for outdoor learning, but there is still a long way to go.

Other important statements, debates and things described

We need to help the children find love for nature and also respect that some children don't like to get dirty and are having difficulties in finding peace in large areas of nature.

We need to address the myth that when children are outside many hours then they will have difficulties when they start in school

Curiosity and motivation = learning

attitude of their teachers. For some educators, outdoor education will be a welcome change, but for others it will take time. To gain confidence they need to try out different activities or participate repeatedly in an outdoor lesson as an observer.

Teacher collectives in kindergartens are not united in their opinion on outdoor education. There will always be a group of opponents, and the principal has limited options to address such a situation given that there is a shortage of teachers in the labour market.(SZ)

Learners' capital ~ Teachers' capital ~ Community and Parental Engagement ~ Relevant Curriculum and instruction ~ Policy

There is an overall culture of mixed feelings related to getting children out of the classroom as there are various degrees of complexity. The mixed feelings involve fear, pressure, stress, insecurity resourcing from being unsupported or not knowing how. On the other end, teachers feel a deep satisfaction when learners are excited, experience the freedom, and share a creative disposition while being outside when constructive conditions are met. The before mentioned complexity involves personal, school and systematic factors.

From the focus groups we realised that there is not enough awareness on outdoor education based on a know-how regarding learning taking place using nature as the learning environment. We can see that teachers and well as policy makers and parents need to acknowledge the benefits of getting learners outside on their general well-being, even if this means creating a mess or getting things dirty. We believe that generating educational material of success stories of how nature prevails as the learning environment can help us form guidelines that can push policies towards the correct direction. At a policy level, there is room for reform as we can identify a missing focus on curriculum based on having a clear outdoor learning framework on a more systematic basis.

We do see that there is an underlining need in the Cyprus context to generate bridges between the first forest school initiative and other outdoor spaces with the rest of formal schooling system, promoting a systematic basis, investing on outdoor learning. As some of our teachers have commented, we need to develop a hybrid model for cyriot context.

class pre-school aged children. There was a mention of the difference between being in 1st grade and kindergarten. She said they felt bad having children being outdoors for too long as the following year they would have to be sitting on a desk for 8 hours a day

Parents/Guardians should have a better understanding of outdoor learning and that children do not waste time/play when being outdoors

Younger children need to understand that being outdoors does not mean that they are playing

There is a good start at promoting outdoor learning, but it is still a young phenomenon in terms of how advanced the practice is in the country.

The relationship that a child has with being outdoors is dependent on what they experience within their homes. A family that has outdoors activities is more likely to have children that can learn better outdoors. (This does NOT relate to where the child lives)

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTENT OF ACTIVITIES

Free play activities
Garden, plants, taking care of it – follow the long process
Experimental play
Science, math, technical, environmental outdoor activities (STEM)
Insects & bugs
Walks outdoors to collect trash
Look for birdlife or insects or plants
Trips where you make a fire and prepare food and involve the children in the making of the fire and the making of the food
Various forms of experiments in connection with e.g. water, air, soil
Find different types of material outdoors to take back to the setting and use to make creativity activities
Risk assessment play games
Mud and water activities
Go on a journey of discovery in the local environment
Use body and senses in nature and outdoor
Sustainability and environmental activities
Promoting an urban stem initiative where sustainability concept is at the core for problem solving – learners finding alternative solutions (creativity)



